



## HAZCOMM vs. HAZMAT vs. HAZARDOUS WASTE What Is The Difference?

AT LAST REPORT there was 213,000 chemicals and chemical compounds being used in this country. And each year thousands of *new* chemical compounds are produced, and become part of our lives at home and at work. Nearly 1.5 billion tons of hazardous materials are transported annually in the U.S., over the road or by rail, aircraft or vessel. A lot of these products improve our lives, but many are harmful to our health and to the environment. The trouble is, these substances become so common to us, we are in danger of using them casually.

A hazardous material is defined as: "A substance (gas, liquid or solid) capable of creating harm to people, the environment, and property." Examples are: solvents, paints, gasoline, adhesives and lubricants. They include materials as common as Drano and as toxic as nuclear fuel. Many people have suffered serious health problems from exposure to hazardous materials. Many areas of our environment have been critically damaged by accidental chemical releases. Trying to understand all the government agencies that regulate these matters is mind-boggling. But, we must all understand the potential harm in these materials, and how to use them and dispose of them properly.

### DEFINITIONS:

The term *HAZCOM* refers to the Hazard Communication Standard, which requires that employees receive training about the chemicals they use in their work. This is sometimes called the "Workers' Right To Know" program. OSHA requires all employers to implement this program.

The term *HAZMAT* is often used when discussing the transport or clean up of hazardous materials, but it actually can mean any *aspect* of hazardous materials production, transport, use, disposal, cleanup, or emergency response. OSHA and the EPA are major agencies of concern.

*HAZARDOUS WASTE* is a contaminated chemical or by-product of a production process that no longer serves its purpose and needs to be disposed of in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency. This could include small amounts of chemicals such as parts washing solvents in a machine shop, or large amounts of construction by-products.

*HAZWOPER* refers to training that deals with hazardous waster operations and emergency response to chemical spills or releases.

### A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT HAZARDOUS MATERIALS:

Manufacturers must provide a Material Safety Data Sheet with all hazardous products they sell..

Materials in transport must be properly labeled, e.g., flammable, explosive, radioactive, etc.

The MSDS must be available to any employee who works with or transports such products.

The MSDS explains the physical and health effects of hazardous substances and how to avoid harm.

The MSDS explains procedures for spills, leaks and disposal.

Hazardous materials or by-products such as gases cannot always be seen or smelled.

Internal or external harm from exposure does not always appear immediately.

Every employee who works with or near large quantities of hazardous materials must know the steps to take and who to contact in the event of a spill.

### TAKE CARE WITH CHEMICALS:

They can make your life and work easier

But they can take your life, too!